



"Lap Dog" and other works by Carryl Brown are attracting attention at Artists in Action Gallery, left. Above, Ken Baxter can turn the most common subjects into works of art.

## A writer talks abo

**By Jerry Johnston**

Deseret News staff writer

"There are many readers of modern fiction who are bitter with writers," says writer William H. Gass. "They are intelligent readers who want to read good things, but they keep asking 'Where are all the good things?'"

"The truth is the better writers are in the universities now and the modern novel is getting more difficult to understand. It's going the same direction modern poetry and painting went. And I'm afraid the split between readers and writers will have to be accepted."

A tidy, pared-down evaluation of recent literary fiction there. Just as modern composers, such as Elliott Carter, leave many listeners in the dust pining for Beethoven, just as "splash" painters like Jackson Pollock drive corps of art lovers back to Van Gogh and Impressionism, *Postmodern* fiction writers put out novels that bewilder the general public.

Novelist John Barth gives us "Sabbatical," a novel where the characters are partially developed in a series of footnotes; Italo Calvino bases a novel on the pictures in a pack of Tarot cards. William Gass works away at "The Tunnel," a book about a man who is writing the preface to another book. Reader's throw their hands up.

"The contemporary novel is difficult," says Gass. "Partly it's due to fear and resentment on the part of the readers. Some of that fear will wear down in time. You have to remember both Faulkner and Joyce were once considered impossible and outrageous."

Soft-spoken, articulate, Gass is anything but outrageous in person. His writing, however, often raises a reaction. And he offered some of that writing in a public reading last week



**William H. Gass**

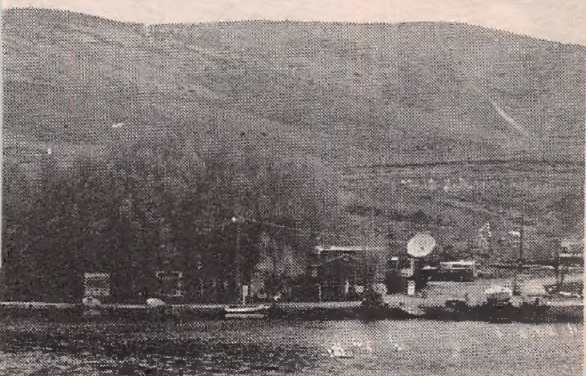
of language. Fiction writers told the most interesting poetry."

Spoken like a true Postmodern

That word again: "Postmodern" with Gass, you need a sense of Here's an over-simplified ex







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